and Forests. The physical verifications, investigations and subsequent action to decide the cases were taken by the Special Investigation Team (SIT).

(b) Out of 9580 cubic meter timber found during physical verifications in these wagons, 5102 cubic meter timber was found to be illegal. No upset price was fixed at the time of detention of wagon.

(c) and (d) The SIT had taken value of the timber as Rs. 10,000/- per cubic meter for imposing penalties. An amount of Rs. 6.09 crores has been recovered by the SIT towards penalties and sale of confiscated timber.

(e) An amount of Rs. 0.17 crores has been spent by SIT till date on physical verifications and sale of confiscated timber.

(f) The timber has been sold on "as is where is basis" as per the accepted practice of conducting sale of such timber.

Cultivation of Cotton

5169. SHRI EKANATH K. THAKUR : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that the cotton growers in North India are reluctant to cultivate the hybrid varieties of cotton and they will not be able to grow Bt. (Bacillus thuringiensis) cotton this season;

(b) whether the farmers are reluctant to cultivate of hybrid varieties as the hybrids in use have now lost all their potency; and

(c) if so, the steps Government propose to take to encourage cultivation of cotton?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI DILIP SINGH JUDEV) : (a) and (b) No, Sir. The cotton growers in North India are not reluctant to cultivate the hybrid varieties of cotton. So far no Bt. Cotton hybrids have been approved for release in the Northern region.

(c) Central Cotton Research Institute, Nagpur and Indian Council of Agricultural Research under the All India Coordinated Cotton Improvement Project are entrusted with cotton research and development work for recommending suitable hybrids for various agro-climatic areas.

ECO-Clubs in Karnataka

5170. SHRI K. B. KRISHNA MURTHY : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of eco-clubs which have, so far, been started in Karnataka;